

GOSPEL

Matthew 13:44-52

Jesus said to the crowds, 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sells everything he owns and buys it.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea that brings in a haul of all kinds. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.

'Have you understood all this?' They said, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Well, then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.'

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

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This Sunday's Gospel Reading (cf. Mt 13:44-52) consists of the final verses of the chapter Matthew devotes to the parable of the Kingdom of Heaven. The passage includes three parables that are very briefly outlined: that of the hidden treasure, that of the precious pearl, and that of the net cast into the sea.

I will look at the first two in which the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to two different "precious" items, namely, the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great value. The reaction of the one who finds the pearl or the treasure is practically the same: the man and the merchant sell everything to buy what is now most dear to them. With these two similes, Jesus proposes to involve us in the building of the Kingdom of Heaven, presenting an essential characteristic of Christian life, of the life of the Kingdom of heaven: those who fully pledge themselves to the Kingdom

are those who are willing to stake everything, who are courageous. Indeed, both the man and the merchant in the two parables sell everything they have, thus renouncing their material security. From this it can be understood that the building of the Kingdom requires not only the grace of God, but also the active willingness of humanity. Everything is done by grace, everything! We need only have the willingness to receive it, not to resist grace: grace does everything but it takes 'my' responsibility, 'my' willingness.

The gestures of that man and the merchant who go searching, depriving themselves of their goods in order to buy more precious treasures, are decisive gestures; they are radical gestures; I would say that they are only 'one way' gestures, not a 'round trip': they are 'one way' gestures. Moreover, they are made with joy because both of them have found a treasure. We are called upon to assume the attitude of these two Gospel figures, so that we too may become healthily restless seekers of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is a matter of abandoning the heavy burden of our worldly certainties that prevent us from seeking and building up the Kingdom: the desire for possession, the thirst for profit and power, and thinking only about ourselves.

In our times, as we are all aware, the lives of some people can end up mediocre and dull because they probably do not go in search of a true treasure: they are content with attractive but fleeting things, glittering flashes that prove illusory as they give way to darkness. Instead the light of the Kingdom is not like fireworks, it is light: fireworks last only an instant, whereas the light of the Kingdom accompanies us all our life.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the opposite of the superfluous things that the world offers; it is the opposite of a dull life: it is a treasure that renews life every day and leads it to expand towards wider horizons. Indeed, those who have found this treasure have a creative and inquisitive heart, which does not repeat but rather invents, tracing and setting out on new paths which lead us to love God, to love others, and to truly love ourselves. The sign of those who walk this path of the Kingdom is creativity, always

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seeking more. And creativity is what takes life and gives life, and gives, and gives... It always looks for many different ways to give life.

Jesus, who is the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value, cannot but inspire joy, all the joy of the world: the joy of discovering a meaning for one's life, the joy of feeling committed to the adventure of holiness.

May the Blessed Virgin help us to search every day for the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven, so that the love God has given us through Jesus may be manifested in our words and gestures.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What are some of the superfluous things that the world offers?



Heart: Which parable of the Kingdom speaks most to you? Why?



Hands: What might it look like to abandon “the heavy burden of our worldly certainties”?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.